

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Garnet Resource Management Plan as approved by the BLM State Director on January 10, 1986 provides a comprehensive framework for managing the public lands and allocating resources in the Garnet Resource Area (GRA) for the next ten or more years. This document is designed to provide, as much as possible, a single source of information for resource specialists, managers, and the public by drawing together information from the draft and final Garnet Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). No new information or recommendations have been introduced. Future management of 145,660 surface acres and 213,385 subsurface acres of mineral estate is described. Although the GRA encompasses nine counties in northwestern Montana, only three have substantial surface acreage of public land, Missoula, Granite, and Powell counties (see Location map). These lands are administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through its Butte District office and Garnet Resource Area office in Montana.

Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the BLM to complete a study of potential wilderness areas within 15 years. The suitability of two Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the GRA was analyzed, and a preliminary recommendation for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System or for a return to multiple use management was made through the Director of the BLM, Secretary of the Interior, and the President. The final decision on wilderness designation will be made by Congress. The Record of Decision for the Garnet RMP recommended both Wales Creek and Hoodoo Mountain Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

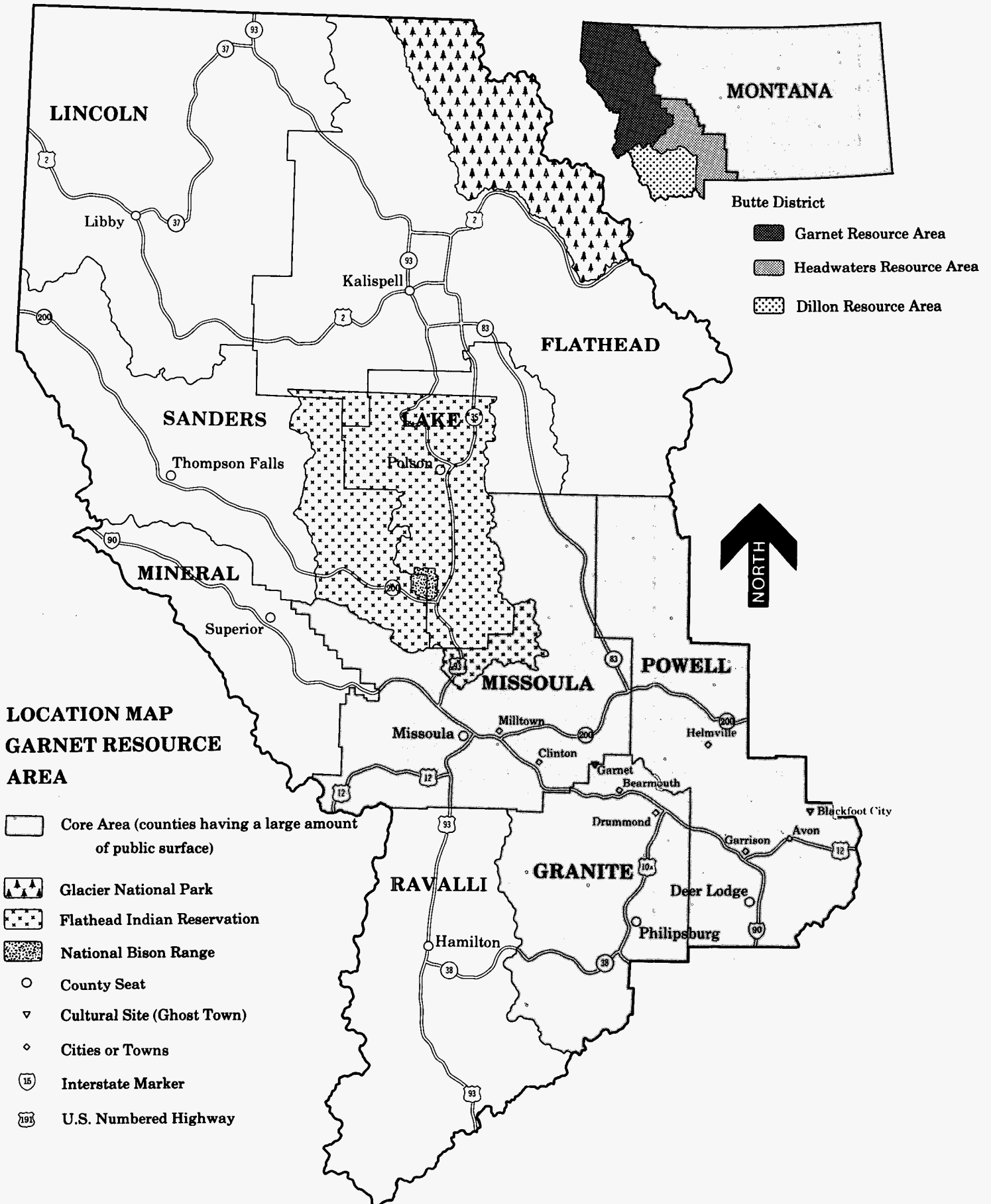
BLM was granted permission to study two additional tracts of land for potential wilderness under Section 202 of FLPMA, which calls for comprehensive land use planning. A recommendation for wilderness designation for the Quigg West study area will be reported to Congress through the Director of the BLM, Secretary of the Interior, and the President. The final decision on wilderness designation will be made by Congress. A decision against wilderness designation for the Gallagher Creek study area has been made by the State Director in the Record of Decision for the Garnet RMP.

The final RMP (USDI, BLM 1985) also analyzed several alternatives for livestock grazing on public land. This fulfilled a court ordered agreement based on a 1973 lawsuit against the BLM by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

This planning document incorporates land use planning guidance previously found in five separate Management Framework Plans (MFP): the Blackfoot, Hoodoo, Salmon Lake, Avon, and Philipsburg MFPs.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION





ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE GARNET RMP

This plan addresses the resolution of five issue groups. Each issue includes a list of needed decisions.

Renewable Resources

How much of the Commercial Forest Land (CFL) should be harvested?

Where and to what degree of intensity can timber management be applied to provide a desired level of production? Is there any public land where fire should not be used as a method to manage the timber and forage resources? Is there any public land where pesticides (herbicides and insecticides) should not be used?

Where should livestock grazing not be authorized?

Which allotments can be prioritized for more intensive grazing management?

What options should be considered for grazing and timber management to meet the needs of wildlife habitat, livestock, watershed, and forest products?

Special Attention Resources

Which wilderness study areas (Wales Creek, Hoodoo Mountain, Gallagher Creek, or Quigg West) or portions thereof, if any, are suitable for designation as wilderness?

How should the WSAs be managed if they are not recommended for wilderness?

Are there any Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) on public land that require special management?

Are there good management reasons for closing additional roads either seasonally or permanently? Where?

What emphasis should be placed on the management of riparian habitat and other special habitats?

Is there public land where the management of wildlife habitat should be the primary objective?

Nonrenewable Resources

Which public land, if any, should not be leased for oil and gas to protect other resource values?

Which public land should have special stipulations applied to oil and gas leases?

Is there public land that should be withdrawn or remain withdrawn from mineral entry to protect other resource values?

Land Ownership and Administration

Which land should be retained in public ownership?

Which public land should be excluded from future routing of major utility rights-of-way? Which public lands should be avoided if possible, and which public lands should remain available for future corridor development?

Where and what type of access is needed to meet resource management objectives and usage of the public lands?

Is there public land that should remain withdrawn from sale, location, and entry under the public land laws to protect certain resources?

Recreation, Cultural, and Aesthetic Resources

How should motorized vehicle use be managed?

How many areas, if any, should be provided for roadless, nonwilderness recreation; and where should they be located?

What areas should be identified primarily for the protection of developed and undeveloped recreation sites?

What recreational opportunities should be provided? Where?

Is there any public land that should be managed primarily for its scenic values? How should this land be managed for other resources?

To what degree should BLM be involved with management of Garnet Ghost Town?

What management emphasis should be placed on cultural or historic sites?

ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS

The following analysis assumptions were used by the interdisciplinary team in determining impacts and in developing the approved plan.

Funding and personnel will be adequate to fully implement all management actions associated with each alternative within ten years following plan approval. Implementation of the plan will begin in 1986.

All RMP recommendations that require action outside of the authority of the District Manager and State Director will be accepted and implemented. For example, recommendations for the revocation of existing withdrawals and the establishment of new withdrawals will be favorably acted upon by the Secretary of the Interior.

Areas recommended as suitable for wilderness designation will be so designated by Congress. Section 603 wilderness study areas recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation will be released by Congress from the BLM Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review and will be managed in accordance with nonwilderness RMP guidelines. Section 202 wilderness study areas recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation will be released for multiple use when the State Director signs the Record of Decision for the RMP.

Wales Creek and Hoodoo Mountain WSAs will remain under Interim Management for up to half the life of the RMP because of the review process. The President has until 1991 to make a recommendation to Congress for designation or nonsuitability of these WSAs. Congress has no set schedule for acting on these recommendations.

Market conditions, encumbrances, resource values, and other factors will permit only 25 percent of the public land outside of the retention zones to be processed in successful disposal actions during the life of the plan. Approximately 95 percent of disposal actions will be exchanges; the remainder will be sales. There will be no significant net gain or loss of resource values resulting from exchanges in the long term (e.g., for every acre of Commercial Forest Land (CFL) disposed of through exchange, an equivalent acre will be acquired). The total acreage of public land will remain at 145,660 acres.

Forty percent of the acres identified for timber harvest will be reentries into stands that have previously had some type of silvicultural treatment.

The average timber yield based on the Missoula Sustained Yield Unit extensive forest inventory, is 76.4 board feet per acre of CFL per year.

One and one-half miles of road are constructed per million board feet of timber harvested. These estimates are based on past harvest practices in the forests on the GRA.

Nine jobs harvesting, planting, and thinning timber are created for every million board feet of timber harvest.

Except for trails, toilets, trailheads, parking, and information signing no new recreational facilities would be constructed at undeveloped recreation sites during the 20-year life of the RMP. However, recreation site potential would be protected within Management Area 10.

Mineral exploration would disturb about ten to twenty acres per year.

The net effect of management area goals and guidelines on timber output, expressed as an estimated percent reduction from the potential yield expected under Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), is shown in Table 1-1.

TABLE 1-1
ESTIMATED REDUCTION IN TIMBER
OUTPUT DUE TO MANAGEMENT AREA
PRESCRIPTIONS

No.	Management Area	% Reduction
1	Riparian Protection Zone	100
2	Riparian Multiple Use Zone	20
3	General Forest Management	0
4	Elk Summer and Fall Habitat Components	20
5	Big Game Summer and Fall Range	20
6	Big Game Winter Range	20
7	Noncommercial Forest and TPCC Withdrawn Commercial Forest	N/A
8	Areas Recommended For Wilderness Designation	100
9	Special Management Areas	100
10	Developed and Undeveloped Recreation Sites	20
11	Historical and Cultural Sites	100
12	Visual Corridor	0
13	Nonforest Habitat	N/A
14	Mineral Production Area	100

Project costs include the initial cost of the project, maintenance over a ten-year period, and the cost of replacement if the project has a life of less than 20 years.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The BLM resource management planning process has nine steps. Figure I-1 lists and highlights the completion dates of each step and the steps where public participation occurred.

Step 1. Identification of Issues

This step identifies resource management concerns, conflicts, and opportunities that can be resolved through the planning process. This process is called scoping and involves public participation.

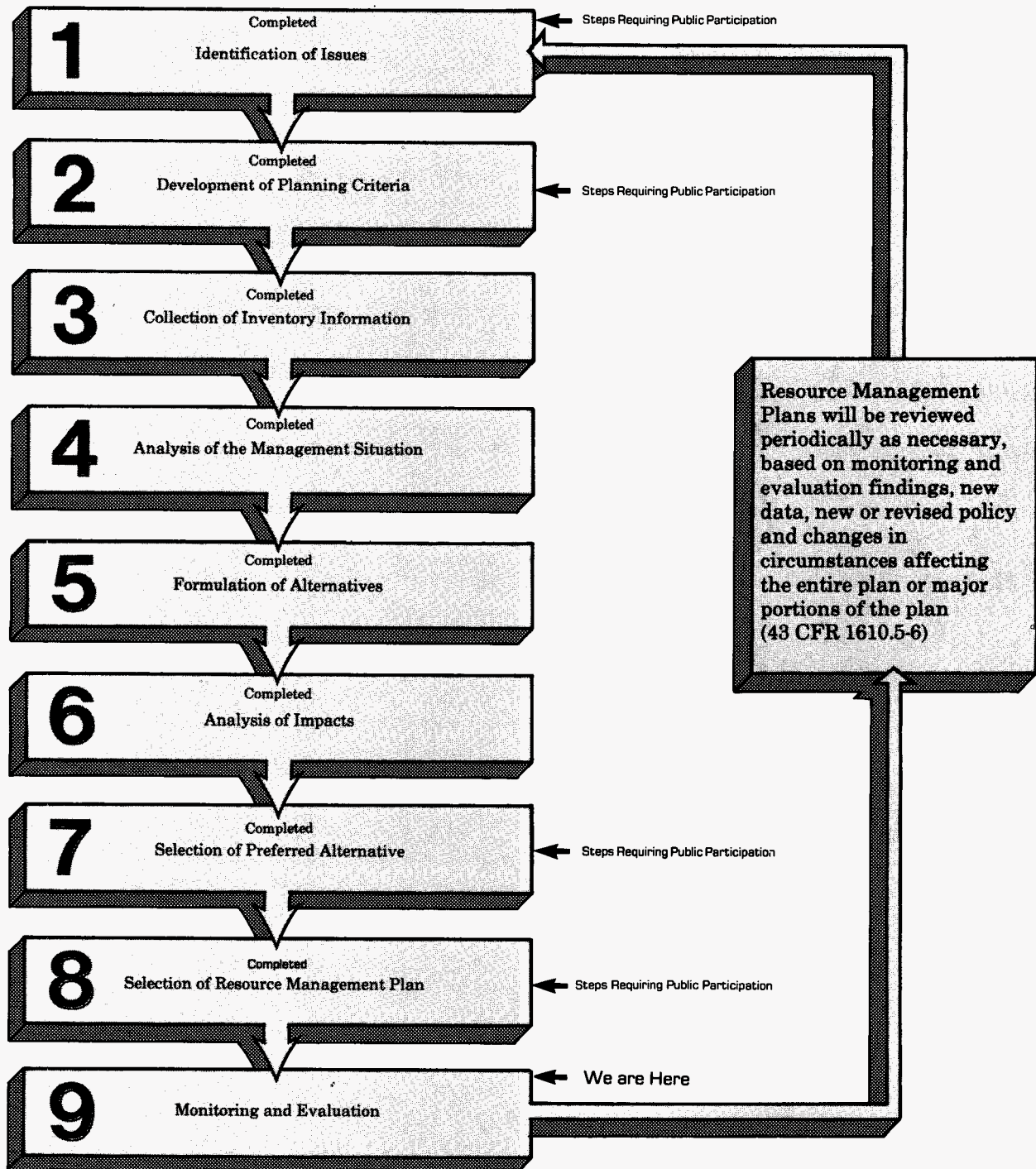
Step 2. Development of Planning Criteria

This step identifies the information needed to resolve issues, formulate and evaluate alternatives, and select the preferred alternative. The criteria are circulated for public review.

Step 3. Collection of Inventory Information

This step collects the data needed to resolve resource issues and other environmental, social, and economic concerns.

FIGURE 1
Steps in the Resource Management Planning Process



Step 4. Analysis of the Management Situation

This step assesses the current situation and provides a baseline for development of a resource management plan. A Management Situation Analysis (MSA) document is produced that describes the physical situation, current management guidance, and resource problems and opportunities.

Step 5. Formulation of Alternatives

This step prepares several complete, reasonable resource management alternatives. A no action alternative describes present management while other alternatives place emphasis on environmental protection or resource production.

Step 6. Analysis of Impacts of Alternatives

This step analyzes the physical, biological, economic, and social impacts of implementing each alternative.

Step 7. Selection of the Preferred Alternative

This step compares the impacts of each alternative and selects the preferred alternative. The interdisciplinary process used in Steps 5 through 7 is documented in a draft RMP/EIS and circulated for public review.

Step 8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan

This step analyzes public comments, modifies the alternatives as appropriate, and serves as a basis for the District Manager to select a proposed resource management plan. The proposed RMP and final EIS is distributed to the public in the final RMP/EIS document. A 30-day protest period is allowed before the resource management plan is adopted. A Record of Decision is published after a consideration of any protests.

Step 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

This step monitors and evaluates the resource condition as the plan is implemented. If monitoring shows that resource issues are not being satisfactorily resolved or that the desired results outlined by the RMP are not being met, the plan may be amended or totally revised.

INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES

Chapters 5 and 7 of the final RMP (USDI, BLM 1985) describe the level of public involvement and degree of public concern in the development of the plan.

The Land Status, Land Ownership Adjustment, and Motorized Vehicle Restriction maps located in the map packet of the draft RMP (USDI, BLM 1984b) should become part of this document. Several corrections to these maps are listed in the Errata of this document.

SUMMARY OF THE RMP

The Garnet RMP is based on the concept of management areas as developed by the Lolo National Forest Plan (USDA, FS 1982b). First, the capabilities of the land were evaluated in a resource inventory. Then possible management options, appropriate for managing the resources on the land, were developed. (Fourteen different management area prescriptions were developed for the Garnet RMP and are listed in Chapter 3 of this document). Next, the capabilities of a given area of land were matched with an array of management options; all of the options are compatible with the multiple use management directives of the BLM but gave emphasis to different resources. Finally, the management options for all lands were arranged into five alternative management plans. (The management area assignments for the selected Garnet RMP are shown on the Selected Alternative map in the map packet.)

Five RMP alternatives were considered in the development of the draft and final RMP. One represented no action, which meant a continuation of current management direction. The other four alternatives provided a range of choices from those emphasizing resource protection to those emphasizing resource production.

The resource management plan incorporated portions of the other four alternatives and generally represented a balance between resource production and protection. The management actions, resource allocations, and environmental consequences that characterize the selected plan are summarized below.

The Plan

Approximately 105,020 acres (93 percent) of commercial forest land will be available for forest management activities. Annual harvest will affect 1,352 acres, yielding 7,030 mbf per year. Approximately 10.5 miles of new road construction will be required annually. The only significant areas of CFL not available for harvest will be special management area (MA 9). However, management restrictions will apply to 62 percent of the available CFL. Approximately 2,080 acres of CFL will be set aside (MA 1) or subject to restrictive timber management (MA 2) to protect and maintain riparian and watershed values; approximately 62,700 acres will be subject to restrictive management to protect or enhance important wildlife values; and approximately 6,620 acres will be set aside to protect or enhance wildlife, watershed, soils, and recreation values. The remaining 40,300 acres (38 percent) of CFL will emphasize forest management activities, subject to SOPs to maintain site productivity and water quality.

A total of 6,245 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) will be allocated to livestock use in the short term, a 5 percent increase over 1985 licensed use. In the long term, available AUMs are projected to increase to 8,013. These additional AUMs are a combined estimate of additional forage from range improvements and

improvement of vegetative conditions on 20 allotments under intensive grazing management.

Livestock carrying capacity of the range resource is projected to increase 28 percent in the long term. It is expected that 90 percent of the range available for livestock grazing will be in good or excellent condition over the long term. Logged areas are not included in the 90 percent because the condition classification method is not applicable.

Livestock use affects 48 percent (29 miles) of the aquatic habitat in the resource area; 21 percent of the aquatic habitat is in suboptimum condition. Intensive grazing management is projected to improve all of the suboptimum habitat through increased bank stability and cover.

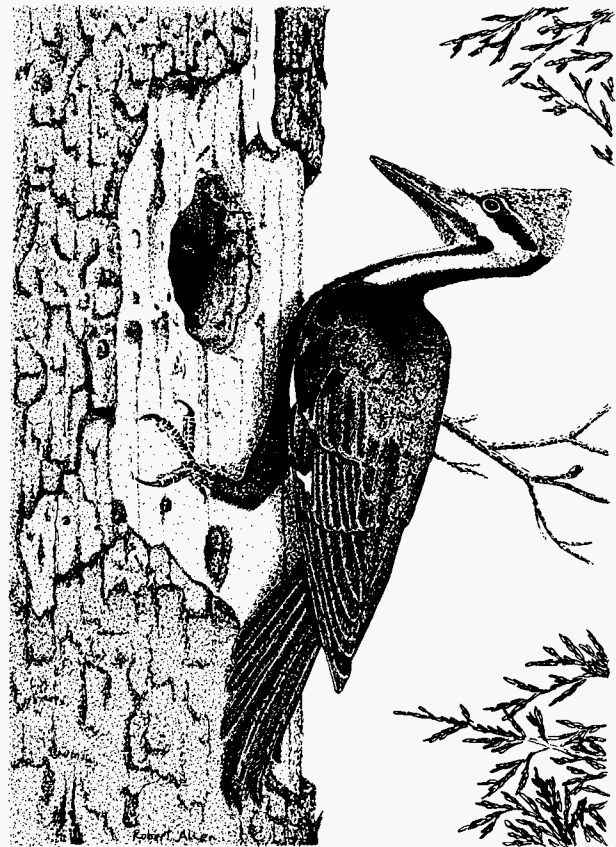
Quigg West, a 520-acre 202 WSA which adjoins a Forest Service RARE II area, will be recommended for wilderness designation contingent upon the designation of the Quigg RARE II area (1807) for wilderness. In the event the Quigg RARE II area (1807) does not become a designated wilderness, the 520 acres of public land will be managed as MA 9. Special management will be emphasized on 8,120 acres largely comprised of portions of the Wales Creek, Hoodoo Mountain, and Gallagher Creek WSAs.

A unique geologic feature, consisting of 20 acres of an exposed limestone formation in Rattler Gulch has been designated as an ACEC.

Under this plan 3,500 acres or 57 percent of the total riparian habitat will be managed emphasizing riparian values. All other riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 5,800 acres (MA 7) of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use. Winter range, land with good summer range potential for elk, and areas of concentrations of habitat features totaling 80,450 acres will be managed to protect or enhance wildlife habitat while allowing for the harvest of timber. In addition, 8,140 acres of largely undeveloped lands, set aside in previous land use plans, will remain undeveloped. Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife habitat are expected to be low to moderate.

Oil and gas leasing will be permitted on 205,066 acres (99 percent) of federal mineral estate. Leasing will be subject to seasonal restrictions on 84,076 acres and to stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy on 8,180 acres. These restricted areas consist largely of road closures, important big game habitat, and special management areas. Approximately 520 acres, recommended for wilderness designation, will not be leased. The remaining 112,810 acres will be leased subject to standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals will be permitted on 203,310 acres (99 percent) in the resource area. In addition to the 1,460 acres withdrawn to protect recreation, powersites, powerlines, scientific, and historical sites; withdrawal will also



be proposed for the 520 acres recommended for wilderness designation and for the 20-acre ACEC. A total of 2,000 acres will be withdrawn from mineral entry.

The land ownership adjustment issue has been resolved by identification of retention zones in areas where public lands will primarily be retained or enhanced. These retention zones total 126,872 acres which are characterized as reasonably consolidated holdings or contain resource values appropriate for public ownership. Retention zones represent 87 percent of the public land base. Public lands outside the retention zones total 18,788 acres. In general, these lands are in small tracts, widely scattered, and often without legal or physical access. They will be considered on their individual merits for retention, exchange, transfer, or sale. All site-specific decisions regarding land ownership adjustment will be made based on criteria identified in FLPMA and the draft RMP (USDI, BLM 1984b).

Future investments in public facilities and improvements, including land and access acquisition, generally will receive highest priority in retention areas.

Public access is available to 95 tracts totalling 114,600 acres or 78 percent of the total acreage. Administrative access is available to an additional 13 tracts comprising 5,320 acres.

Public access will be sought for an additional 9,500 acres, while administrative access will be sought for an additional 8,150 acres. This plan will result in overall improvement in the land ownership pattern and in increased legal access to public land.

The areas recommended for wilderness (520 acres) and ACEC (20 acres) will be excluded from corridor development. Another 17,620 acres have been identified as avoidance areas; public land with avoidance areas generally will not be available for corridor development. The remaining 127,500 acres (87.5 percent) will be available for further consideration. Criteria provided in the draft RMP (USDI, BLM 1984b) will guide future site-specific decisions.

Recreation opportunities will not be significantly affected by this plan as developmental activities are directed away from key recreation areas. A total of 41 undeveloped recreation sites, near water or road closure gates, are identified for protection. Other recreation management includes maintaining existing and potential walk-in hunting areas, cooperatively managing Garnet Ghost Town, managing the Garnet National Winter Recreation Trail, developing cross-country ski trails, and acquiring access to river tracts. No new outfitters and guides will be licensed for hunting except in conjunction with adjoining national forest lands. There will be no significant effects on visual quality. Management of cultural or historical sites will include interpreting key sites around Garnet and all others receiving protective management. There will be a beneficial effect on cultural resources.

Most public land will be designated as limited, with all vehicles including ORVs, restricted to open roads and trails. Exceptions may be made for snowmobiles. The 520-acre Quigg West, the 20-acre ACEC, the 240-acre Karshaw Mountain area, and the 4,280-acre Ram Mountain area will be closed. The need for additional road closures will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Seasonal closures will be implemented in areas to provide wildlife security, reduce recreation conflicts, reduce road maintenance, provide watershed protection, and enhance recreation, including the opening of private lands for hunting. It is generally the policy that new roads be closed or limited for motorized vehicle use. All existing closures will be emphasized for continuance.

Air quality will not be significantly affected. Watershed conditions are expected to improve significantly. Water quality should improve moderately.

